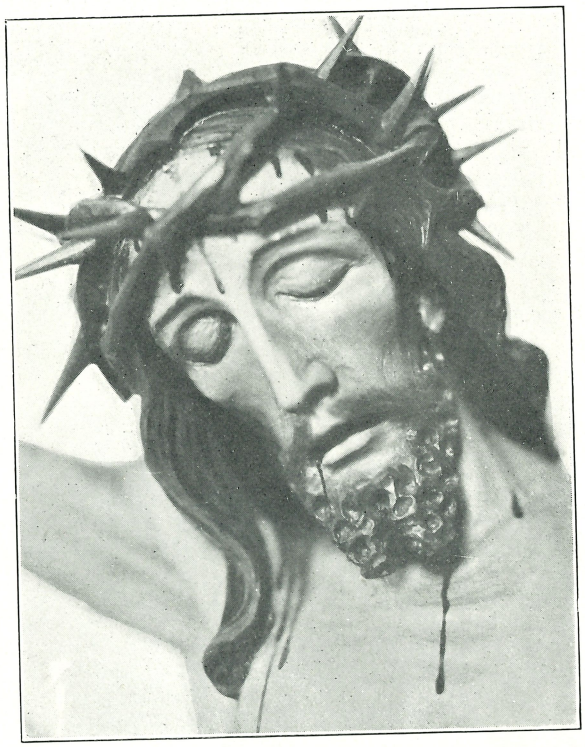
The MEDICAL MISSIONARY



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The MEDICAL MISSIONARY

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A VISIT TO THE ABORIGINES

By ANNA DENGEL, M.D.

AS HIS EXCELLENCY, Rt. Rev. Bernard J. Sullivan, S.J., Bishop of Patna, had invited us last year to help to spread the Kingdom of Christ among the Santals, I was glad to be able, on this trip, to follow his suggestion to pay them a visit.

Of the 338,000,000 inhabitants of India, there are approximately ten or eleven million aborigines. Among these, are the Santals, numbering, perhaps, one hundred thousand. Santal-land is in the eastern part of the Patna Diocese, about 25° north latitude and 88° east longitude. The Santals dwell on the tops of the Sevalie Ranges—their pergunnahs (districts) transversing these ranges in parallel lines from east to west. A dravidian people with a Mongolian type of features, toned somewhat by the tropical influences of India, they are short of stature, but well built; of dark complexion; and have high cheek bones, thick lips, and flat spread noses. Whereas the men dress very scantily; the women are amply clothed, each with a flowing cloth, one end of which is fastened at the waist, wound around the body and swung up over the right shoulder, leaving the arm and left shoulder free. When they can afford it, the women adorn themselves with zinc and bell metal ornaments, sometimes weighing as much as thirty-four pounds.

Courtesy of "Jesuit Missions"
A CHOCOLATE ANGEL

The Santals are demon worshippers and full of superstition. Their commandments consist in believing that it is wrong to steal and wrong to kill. They propitiate the evil spirits in times of sickness, famine, or other troubles, by sacrificing a cock.

The harvest is over in the month of January and then begins the greatest festival of the year. A proclamation is made before the festival starts, which reads: "Shut your ears to all you hear; shut your eyes, to all you see." Dancing and drinking to the beating of drums goes on at night, and a free life ensues. These feasts are celebrated in turn from village to village and continue until March, when a good portion of the harvest has been wasted in drink. They brew an intoxicant from a grain called "Marwa," and also from rice. Then, before half the year is over, the Santals are hard-pressed for food. They borrow money from the traders and money-lenders in the district and then the trouble begins. Because of the fact that they can not write or keep accounts, they are at the mercy of the money-lenders.

The highest numeral in the Santal language is ten, corresponding to the number of their fingers. When a Santal wishes to take a document to court against a written document of the Mahajan (money-lender), he brings a wisp of straw, or a cord, knotted with ten knots and then a space and then ten more knots and a space, and so on, until the desired number has been attained. In a similar manner, the date, fixed for any event (for example, a marriage), is computed by knotting a cord with the required number of knots and

Courtesy of "Jesuit Missions"

HIS EXCELLENCY, RT. REV. BERNARD J. SULLIVAN, S.J., BISHOP OF PATNA. WITH SOME OF THE BOYS OF HIS FLOCK

each day opening one until there are none left.

On the way to Santal land, it was necessary for me to stop in Patna. Here, I spent three very pleasant and interesting days as the guest of the nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They showed me all over their school, such a fine one—one of the largest and oldest Catholic girls' schools in India. Later, I called on His Excellency, Bishop Sullivan, and we planned the trip to Santal-land. He insisted on conducting me there, personally.

The day we left, we made a good start, rising at 4.15 a. m.; Holy Mass at 4.45, and breakfast at 5.30. After the luggage was loaded on a ghari (a horse carriage) His Excellency took me to the station in a taxi. There, I was comfortably seated in a ladies' compartment. For the six hours' trip to Bhagalpur, I had provided myself with a book on the Santals, by Miss M. C. Cunningham Moorat, to whom I wish to make acknowledgment for some of the facts in this article. Between reading and enjoying the scenery—rice fields and palm trees—the time passed quickly.

At about noon, we arrived in Bhagalpur where the Rev. Father O'Leary, S.J., awaited His Excellency. We were then driven through the crowded bazaars of the fairly large, though not very clean city, to the Sisters' House. As we drove into the compound, a white figure surrounded by a crowd of little girls appeared on the verandah. The latter with one accord gave a lusty shout: *"Yesu Marang"* (God be praised); each, at the same time, touching her little folded hands to her forehead. At the sight of the Bishop, their eyes twinkled and their little feet danced. When they were told that I was a Sister, they repeated their greeting. I could tell from the roundness of their faces and the flattened noses that they were Santals. There were about eighty of them, all boarders. It turned out that they were in Retreat, if you please—little pagans of yesterday—and that they really kept silence and took it all very seriously. Of course, such an event as the arrival of the Bishop, was too much for them and their pent-up emotions burst forth into greeting, Retreat, or no Retreat. Here, I was left for rest and refreshment.

The Sisters were most hospitable. They took me into their Chapel which is, I believe, the smallest one I have ever seen. It can accommodate the community of three, at a pinch. For Mass and at other times, the door is opened on to the verandah where the Santal little folk are accommodated.

I had a long and very interesting talk with their Retreat Master, Rev. Father Creane, S.J., one of the Apostles of the Santals. He had visited us in Washington seven years ago, just before leaving the United States and a short time after our Society had been started. His work has been among the Santals ever since he has been in India. He has broken much ground and is still doing so and with real success. He told me that there were several other priests and a Sister working among them, and that after a few years of labor—hard labor—several thousand have become Catholics.

The Bishop's car, quite a good screened lorry, drove up and it was time to start for Santal land. We took with us two little Santal girls: one of them, Josephine, aged about eleven years, was, His Excellency told me, the daughter of real confessors of the Faith. Her parents had suffered much persecution and her father had been nearly killed on account of his perseverance.

We had not got very far outside of Bhagalpur,

(*Continued on page* 8)

NEW YORK'S MISSION SUNDAY PROCESSION

HERE WAS A MINIATURE HOLY CROSS PRIEST; THERE, A FRANCISCAN FRIAR

THE last notes of the prelude dwindled into nothingness. For a fraction of a second, the voice of the great organ was hushed and then its sonorous tones swelling to the strains of the processional hymn and blending with the choir of more than a hundred voices, broke the stillness. Five thousand heads turned eagerly towards the rear of the church where the shuffling of little feet announced the beginning of a great procession. The unique afternoon celebration of Mission Sunday in St. Patrick's Cathedral was begun.

Down the aisle they marched, hundreds of little boys and girls, all under twelve years of age, each dressed in the habit and with the insignia of one of the mission orders of the church in America. Here, was a miniature Holy Cross Priest; there, a diminutive Franciscan Friar, a Franciscan Missionary of Mary, a Maryknoller; Holy Cross Sisters, Ursulines, Dominicans, Jesuits, etc. On and on they came, in habits of black, white, brown, and gray, five hundred children followed by six monsignori, scores of priests and monks, hundreds of acolytes and seminarians, two bishops and, finally, Cardinal Hayes. His Eminence, robed in the splendor of his office, was preceded by six little boys and followed by six others who acted as train-bearers—all dressed as court pages of the middle ages, in royal black and purple velvet with red hose. The procession, half a mile in length, marched down the aisle and entered the Sanctuary of the High Altar.

His Eminence lagged far behind the rest of the train as he paused to bless the thousands who knelt in his path.

Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament which followed, was given by the Most Rev. John J. Dunn, auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese and chairman of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Then, Monsignor William A. Quinn, national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, after a short introduction by Monsignor Michael J. Lavelle, head of the cathedral, delivered the sermon.

"We have reached a solemn moment in man's history," Msgr. Quinn said. "Never in the time of man has the future seemed so incalculable, never has the political and social cauldron so seethed and boiled. Radicalism, communism and other cults and theories against constituted governments are in the offing and men are withering away with fear.

"In the fourteen years since the World War, more changes in customs, institutions and habits have taken place than in any 500 years since the fall of the Roman Empire. Now all these man-made institutions are shaking on their foundations and men are looking to Christ and the Church for salvation.

"The Church has never followed the philosophy of passive defense. Like Marshal Foch, who said 'Let us attack' when his left wing was surrounded, his right endangered and his center giving way, Pope Pius XI in these times has said, **'Launch out into the deep**—it is **for the missions that the papacy itself exists.'"**

In closing, Monsignor Quinn urged that the people at home support the missions with increased fervor, if not with more money, then with more prayers and good works.

After the sermon, Cardinal Hayes presided at vespers, which concluded the services. The procession again wound its way through the church carrying a statue representing the death of St. Francis Xavier on Sancian Island, a statue from the Philippines of the Blessed Virgin, and a statue, from India, representing Christ carrying His cross.

DR. AGNES McLAREN, 1837-1913

(Note—This is the continuation of the abridged translation from the French of the life of Dr. Agnes McLaren, the great pioneer doctor who initiated Catholic medical mission work in the Punjab.)

Synopsis: Dr. Agnes McLaren came of a Scottish clan dating back to the sixth century. Her father, Duncan, a Presbyterian, who at twelve was a draper's apprentice, rose to be one of the first merchants and most renowned citizens of Edinburgh. In 1848, a few years after the death of his second wife, he married a Quaker, Priscilla Bright. By this marriage, Agnes and two other children were born. The McLaren family lived at Newington Hall in great harmony and happiness.

Agnes having her father's simplicity, his sense of duty and public spirit became a devoted friend of the poor. She joined the congregation of the Rev. McGuthrie, the founder of the Ragged Schools. Later she became very active in the Women's Suffrage Movement. After her father's death in 1886, she believed she could give greater service to humanity by the practice of medicine. The University of Edinburgh's Faculty of Medicine had practically closed its doors to women students, so Agnes, in order to ascertain the possibilities for study abroad, consulted Cardinal Newman and Cardinal Manning. On the latter's advice she went to Montpellier. There, she pursued her studies at the celebrated school of medicine and after two years of study received her doctor's degree. She proved herself a fine scholar and won the esteem of her teachers. Agnes McLaren was the first woman whom the faculties of Montpellier crowned as a doctor of medicine.

CHAPTER V

Agnes' Private Life at Montpellier

Having followed Agnes in her studies at Montpellier, one is naturally curious to know a little about her private life at this time. Here, she was alone and strange in a large city.

After having rented and furnished a small apartment in town, she engaged a simple country woman as a servant. Later, she learned that there was a house of Franciscan Hospital Sisters in Montpellier where she might board. Giving up her apartment, she went there. Soeur Francoise who was charged to take care of her wrote:

"She was an accomplished young lady and one whom I never saw commit the least imperfection during the time that she passed in the house. Only once did I see her show some sign of displeasure, but even on that occasion it was more than excusable, for someone had forgotten to deliver a message to her concerning one of her patients. After she had obtained her degree, Dr. Combal and Dr. Courty, both of whose courses she had followed, confided to her care some of their patients; these she cared for in the most assiduous manner. Indeed, she performed her actions with the utmost perfection. For her, everything pertaining to medicine was sacred.

"She ignored all coquetry and although, fashionably and well-dressed, she possessed great simplicity. Her hair was short and there was an absence of all vanity. Though short in stature, her bearing was perfect and her dignity natural. When she appeared in the rooms where the students assembled, all light conversation stopped. The students did not permit themselves to utter the least improper word in her presence. They called her 'Miss Medicine,' not out of disdain, but because of the singularity of the case.

"On Fridays, she fasted and her mortification in food at other times was not wanting. On one occasion the lentil soup was burned. All the boarders sent it back without having touched it. Miss Agnes alone ate hers to the last spoonful. The serving sister excused herself for having served her something so distasteful. 'I thought,' she answered, 'that it was impossible to serve me anything that could do me harm. What does it matter, then, if it is more or less good?'

"Miss Agnes was not very affectionate in her speech, but it was a real happiness for her to send small gifts to her friends. She would stay up late at night even to finish little presents for those whom she loved; at other times, these gifts were made for someone who had offended her. A certain Miss C., living in the same house, caused her much annoyance by tales that were entirely false. Miss Agnes excused her saying, 'If Miss C. spoke thus, she must have done it, thinking that what she said was true.' From that day on, she lavished on Miss C. kindliness and friendliness. If anyone questioned her about her action, she said, 'In the Gospel is written: "Do good to those who do you evil."' The Gospel was her rule of conduct and she followed it to the letter.

"On the 31st of December, I found her, rather late, standing before her mantlepiece and when I remarked the advanced hour, she replied, 'Ah! One can not think too much on this last day of the year! Has not one to examine one's conduct during the time just passed? One lets escape so many useless words, does so many reprehensible deeds. One ought to think of the new year and of all one has to do to use it well. I could pass the whole night in thinking of it.'

"Though possessing delicate health, she undertook work above her strength and often unable to go on, she would throw herself, fully dressed, on her bed; but after having had some rest, she turned back to the task. In short, I said to myself, 'If this lady were a Catholic, she surely would be canonized.'"

During her sojourn at Montpellier, Agnes, already well directed by Dr. Combal, realized the extraordinary value of another doctor whose merits and fame were well established—Dr. Grasset. He gave her much assistance by his advice and was extremely kind to her.

In order to practice medicine in England and Scotland, it was necessary for Agnes to have a state degree. She obtained this by passing successfully the examination of the Royal College of Physicians at Dublin, the only one of the United Kingdom which legally admitted women to the practice of medicine (October 22, 1878). Later on (December 2, 1881), she was made a member of honor of this college and on December 19, 1882, was raised to "Socius" (fellow), an honor accompanied by certain privileges.

Some time after this license examination, Agnes, armed with her credentials, went to Cannes where an English colony of some importance—because of the number and quality of the colonists—had settled. It was a promising field of work, as she could make use of her acquired knowledge and also satisfy her inclinations to do good, especially to her fellow countrymen, for she loved her own country.

IF SPRING WERE HERE

If I only could
Find a bluebird in a wood,
List to a song sparrow's note,
Hear its trilling in its throat;
Any birds except those flocks
Of starlings flying in the copse.

If I only might,
See a yellow jonquil, bright,
Or a crocus of deep blue
Glowing with Our Lady's hue—
Not grasses kissed by
Jack Frost's lips,
Or the willow's pussy tips.

If the spring were only here
With its gentle feathery cheer
Bestowed on bird and bush and cloud,
My soul with joy would cry aloud.
Oh, so thankful I should be
If the spring would come to me.

—*Selected.*

The Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries is a religious community founded for the purpose of bringing medical aid to the foreign mission field. Please address enquiries to: Dr. Anna Dengel, Catholic Medical Mission House, Brookland, Washington, D. C.

DETAIL OF PORTAL OF NOTRE DAME LA GRANDE, POITIERS, 12TH CENTURY

FULL OF GRACE

WE were leaning over the rail of the ship where so many confidences had been exchanged between us. I was not surprised then when my companion blurted out "Why do you Catholics make so much of the Immaculate Conception?"

I was, however, rather taken aback by this honest difficulty. There was a time when every Catholic would have warmed up to such a discussion at a moment's notice. For it was still a matter of controversy, a truth which might have been lost if it had not been fought for. Today we are in peaceable possession.

We all know that we came into this world burdened with the sin of Adam which had the consequences of all sin; it corrupted and weakened his nature. We have inherited his nature as he passed it down—corrupt. By the Immaculate Conception Our Lady was exempted from that debt, and never subject to this corruption. We believe that, when God took possession of her soul at the beginning, His presence would have made any blemish impossible.

My friend was more nearly touched by his personal corruption than by his community debt and thought more of Our Lady's perfect nature than of her preservation from original sin. He pictured Our Lady's perfection as something beautiful and fragile and rather helpless. I sought to represent it as something beautiful and living and forceful.

Everyone in his own inner experience has evidence of a tendency to evil. There are some great Catholic theologians who would prefer to call this tendency a weakness, not a stain. We are besieged and ambushed on all sides, they say, by spirits who work on our imagination. We have strong reasons for rejecting this. Spirits may or may not play on our imagination. They can not force our will, the inner citadel which depends on ourselves alone. Now when a wrong deed is outlined in our imagination, do we not often feel an urge to do it, do we not experience that depraved inclination of our will which is one of the effects of original sin? The Blessed Virgin was free from this tendency, never for an instant had the devil and his works any attraction for her.

Two men in the presence of a sum of money which would never be missed react differently. One of them has a desire to pocket it and fights against his inclination. The other feels no such inclination. The first man commits no sin, for a temptation is not a sin. Still, he is not as good a man as the other for there is a kink in his character.

Is it such an enviable distinction, this absence of all attraction towards what is evil? There are those dear old ladies who can trot round the Louvre and the most dangerous theaters without ever suspecting the presence of evil. And all the books ever written would go on the White List if the authors had their way. It is refreshing to meet such characters, but we have more respect for the man who can say with firm sanity: such a book is filthy; such a one is all right. We like to see a bit of dash and spirit in a man even if he

dashes in the wrong direction. To sum up, we have no respect for negative innocence, for the innocence which comes from dullness or want of knowledge or want of courage. When we think of the Immaculate we must guard against such a conception of her character.

She loved with an intensity that has no parallel, and she loved God alone. Her love was courageous enough to enable her to face the mob and to stand against the supreme religious authorities of the land. It is of this positive side of Our Lady's character that we must not lose sight when we contemplate her immaculate nature.

She has been compared to a lily of the valley, to an enclosed garden, to a sealed fountain and these similes convey to our minds the idea of stainless purity. Only let us beware of making her as defenceless as the lily which a rough wind can wither, as tame as a closed garden, as lifeless as the still waters of a sealed fountain. Do not isolate this one quality of stainlessness. Do not think of it as something dead or static. It is the attribute of a torrential force by which that force is directed to The Good, that is, to God.

As we have mentioned, the whole race of man is infected. Every man has a tendency to what he knows is wrong. The law of the spirit tells him what is wrong. The tendency to go against this law of the spirit is called the law of the flesh. The use of the word "law" in this connection is significant. It shows the universality of the evil. To escape it, a miracle is necessary.

To imagine that the God of purity could be born of one who had even the slightest leaning to sin is repugnant to the common sense of mankind. It seems moreover contradictory in itself. The human being, composed of body and soul is not two beings but one. When you say that a man is not spotless you mean the man, not merely a part of him, not merely his soul. It is thus we talk about the most pure Flesh and Blood of Christ. That Flesh and Blood was once the flesh and blood of Mary. Mary is pure with the purity of Our Lord Himself.

"She is, then a human being, with the impossibility of sinning, this superabundance of sweetness and light which the Immaculate Conception implies." This is a mistaken notion. Our downward tendencies are not part of our human nature; they are the sad heritage of a fall and were it not for that fall we should not have to suffer them. Even as it is we feel a home-sickness for our original innocence, and our eyes rest gladly on the Blessed Virgin, "Our tainted nature's solitary boast."

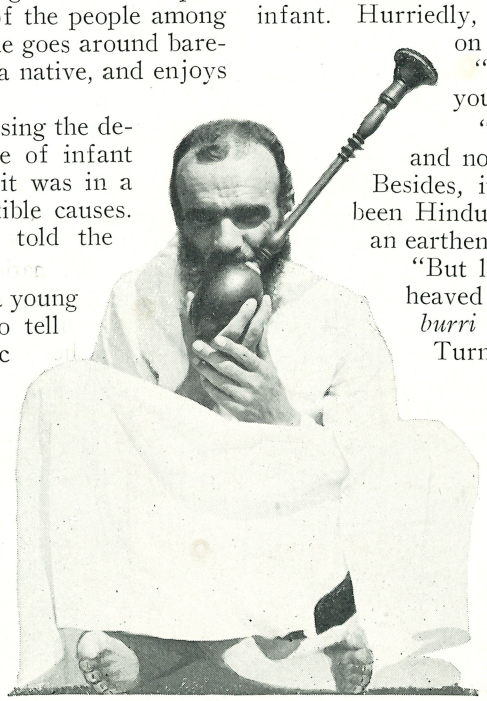
Her great merit is the ease with which she routed all enemies of the human race. Our Lady did not falter in times of stress; she stood to the end beside the Cross.

THE ROCK.

FATHER NORCKAUER, C.S.C., CALLS AT THE MEDICAL MISSION HOUSE

The Reverend Father M. J. Norckauer, C. S. C., our most recent visitor, has just got back from Bengal where he has worked for the past eleven years. He believes in adopting as much as possible the habits and customs of the people among whom he works. In Bengal, he goes around barefoot, can squat for hours like a native, and enjoys pulling on his hookah.

Father Norckauer, in discussing the deplorable fact of the high rate of infant mortality in India, said that it was in a large measure due to preventible causes. As an example of this, he told the following story:



"One afternoon," he said, "a young Baptist came to my house to tell me that at his *bari* his Catholic sister-in-law had given premature birth to a child and that the child was dying. I set out with my baptismal kit. On my arrival, three or four grandams pointed out a mite of an infant placed on a mat at the foot of a tree in the yard.

"Is it dead?" I asked.

"*Kee janee?*" (Who knows?) was the laconic answer.

"I bent over the little form and touched it—cold as death. A slight heave of the tiny chest told me, however, that life still remained in the infant. Hurriedly, I baptized it. Then I turned on the old cronies.

"Why in the name of God have you left this child to die?"

"It was born before its time and no child lives that is thus born. Besides, it is accursed. Had we still been Hindus, we should have put it into an earthen pot and hung it up in a tree."

"But look," I said, "its little breast heaved again. It wants to live. Here, *burri* (grandam), take the child. Turn it over face down on your left hand and give it a spank or two. There now, no wonder it could not breathe with its nose and throat choked up like that.

"A tiny cry escaped the baby and another and another. Leaving directions as to its proper care, I left for home a little later. But I had come too late. The child died at sundown."

A VISIT TO THE ABORIGINES

(*Continued from page 3*)

when, lo and behold, we had a puncture. While the driver mended it, I watched the monkeys playing in the rice fields. There was a number of a large yellowish variety, with long tails. The road we were on was quite a thoroughfare and in a short time our driver was surrounded by a group of boys who watched him with interest. Apparently, boys are boys, everywhere. Soon, we were off again, and the road being good, we made excellent time. The November air was pleasant, not too hot and not too cold; the scenery, full of variety. There were women carrying babies on their hips—babies asleep, babies crying lustily; babies gesticulating expressively; there were men bearing long poles of bamboo, or laden with fruit, chickens, or baskets with various contents. Near the villages, we saw many little boys and girls—"chocolate angels" as one missionary calls them.

The villages consisted of a number of mud huts, each having one door, a thatched roof and—that which is characteristic of Santal huts—a pinda, or ledge, all around the house which served as a seat and also a shelf for utensils, etc. Married sons each had his hut adjoining one occupied by his parents. In the center of the various huts of a family was a space which served many purposes. It was the playground of the young folk, always so numerous; the place where the women of the household could get fresh air and sunshine; there, they spread out the rice and spices to dry, washed their various utensils, etc. It was also the place where the buffaloes trod out the rice.

The houses were small, having only space enough to sleep in and for storing certain things. They were windowless and therefore, dark. Many a family group had besides these a kitchen hut and a covered shed for the domestic animals.

We passed one village where a *"tamasha"* (feast) was being celebrated. A great crowd was absorbed in watching two men, dressed in gaudy and sparkling clothes, dance to the beating of drums and to the tune of some weird instrument which we could not see. Further along, we met a group of thirty men who were pulling a heavy road roller. Their muscles had to take the place of steam. I wanted to take a snapshot of this picture of human drudgery, but it was already dusk.

For quite a while, we drove past hills with piles of stones heaped, in a peculiar manner, on top of one another. The Bishop called it: "The Garden of the Gods." Silent brown men with cloth-swathed heads were doggedly herding their flocks. Here and there, one saw shepherds crooks, grasped by bony hands, guiding with agile manipulation an errant goat or cow—the only break in the all-pervading monotony of motion. The orange glow, reflected by the setting sun in miniature lakes, splashed with color the sombre harmony of men and animals and the ever-deepening shadows of the black-fingered palms and weird oriental trees. As the colors grew softer and softer and the gray veil of night was finally drawn, I felt both sorry and glad, for to look at such beauty is a strain. I was grateful to the Creator for His wisdom which alternates the glory of the light with the restful darkness of the night.

At 7 p. m., we arrived at our destination, a fairly large village in Santal land. The starlight was so brilliant we could see, distinctly, the little mud buildings of the Chapel and rectory. There was no flicker of a candle; no sound! The Bishop knocked and knocked again and there was no answer. There, we stood wondering what to do.

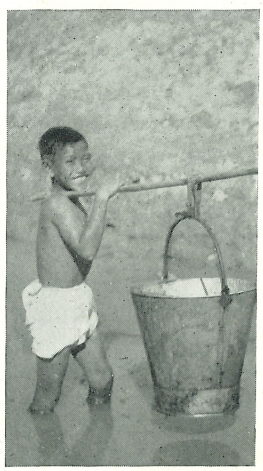
(*To be continued*)

THE HOLY FAMILY

She sang at her spinning hopefully
For joy that her eyes could see
St. Joseph plying the carpenter's trade
The Lad so close to her knee;
It had work to do—this Family,
Jesus, and Joseph, and she.

She sang at her work still hopefully
Though Saint Joseph was not of the three;
Christ blessed the Marriage at Cana
Answ'ring her simple plea;
It had work to do—this Family,
Jesus and she.

She sang at her work unceasingly,
Though her Love had died on the tree;
His followers needed her courage,
Facing the stormy sea;
It had work to do—this Family,
Just she.

—Don Bosco *in India.*

May He support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done! Then in His mercy may He give us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last!—*Cardinal Newman.*